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## LETTERS TO PROMINENT PERSONS.

### FAREWELL WORDS TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

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MY DEAR SECRETARY : It is precisely three years since I endeavored, by means of an open letter in *THE REVIEW*, to express my sense of the obligation under which you placed your countrymen when you consented to become the bulwark of the new administration. You must, I think, have recognized my sincerity, though a constitutional bias in favor of plain speaking has sometimes in similar cases defeated a kind intention. In offering yourself as sponsor for an unknown President, you exemplified the spirit in which a great nation loves to be served. You rejected the selfish persuasion that there was only one official station which could add to your fame, and accepted the uncongenial function of allaying popular anxiety. You doubtless anticipated many of the tribulations which commonly adhere to a vicarious sacrifice, and in cheerfully confronting them in behalf of the people you gave a most chivalrous construction to the motto of "noblesse oblige."

But the result has been very different from what you expected. The historian of current events who should assert that he failed to recall another instance where a great reputation was so quickly wasted as yours has been could not safely be accused of having a short memory. If such a declaration should be so altered as to read "recklessly wasted," it would at once become inaccurate and misleading. You have not been reckless in the dissipation of your fame, but cautious, rather, and circumspect. You seem to the dispassionate observer to have arranged your own eclipse with a careful attention to every detail of the obscurity; to have foreseen, and, indeed, to have brought about with elaborate pains, the circumstances of your own extinction. I know that this appearance of things is deceitful. You are not a deliberate suicide. You have ardently longed that your sun might

never set, and it cannot be doubted that you will retire from public life with a bitter consciousness of having been unequal to the task that you assumed. You will not understand it, for you do not understand yourself. It is so many years since you imbibed the idea that you were a statesman of the first rank, and your countrymen so long insisted upon that estimate, that you will never quite realize the truth which is now apparent to every one else.

The country and not alone your own party was under the spell of the Bayard tradition. There may have been individuals in the halcyon past who had conceived the startling suspicion that the sedate and frigid Senator from Delaware was not much larger than his State, but if so they never divulged it. In the eyes of the people, without political distinction, you were a noble and notable figure. The whisper of your name in connection with the Presidency was heard for many successive years with an incredulous smile, but the incredulity testified to an accurate estimate of the blind guides of the party which your membership illustrated and was not in the least degree a reflection upon yourself. Indeed, so partial was the judgment of your fellow men, that the most ardent of your political adversaries were always reminded by your affiliation with Democracy of Shakespeare's jeweled toad. If your party could have been prevailed upon to nominate you, and if so remarkable a selection should have been ratified at the polls, it would have been universally acknowledged that for the second time good had come out of Nazareth, and your compatriots would have felt a pleasurable thrill of pride and satisfaction at the apotheosis of hereditary virtue.

Do not misunderstand me to say, Mr. Secretary, that your countrymen have ever regarded you with affection, or with reverence, which implies affection. That is an emotion which you never evoked. Nor, in truth, was awe precisely the sentiment that you inspired. It has been said that Daniel Webster occasionally appeared to his contemporaries as Moses appeared to the Israelites, "as he emerged from the dark clouds and thick smoke of Sinai, his face all radiant with the breath of divinity." You, sir, never so shone upon mankind. Your admirers, among whom I used to take peculiar pleasure in considering myself enrolled, were, fortunately, never called upon to stand and deliver a reason for the faith that was in them. You are not yet old, and it is only a short time since you were young, but for all practical pur-

poses you had been handed down to us from antiquity, and there was not a human being so profane as to invalidate your nimbus.

Four years have now elapsed since you condescended to be monopolized by a portfolio, for it was not later than January, 1885, when you became aware that Grover Cleveland had determined to make you the instrument of his own immortality. Three months later you were seated in the chair of Seward, with the approbation of the American people, and from that coign of vantage you forthwith began to survey the world, and prepare to open your oyster. The nations of the earth had schooled themselves against surprise at the irruption of representative functionaries from the United States, and had generally avoided all manifestations of alarm; but you succeeded in startling more than one of them out of the composure which befits great kings and commonwealths. I shall not arouse painful memories, some of which have been so long asleep that it is better to give them the benefit of the doubt and assume that they are dead, by anything more precise than an allusion to the wonderful diplomatic discoveries that you made when you turned your double convex lens upon the Democratic cohorts in search of patriots who were willing to leave their native land for a term of years. The collection which you made and subsequently dispersed over the face of the earth, bore such witness to the possibilities of our soil and climate as not even the Paris Exposition had been able to furnish. That famous orchid, Keiley Virginiensis, was perhaps your most conspicuous "find," but others were not less skilfully unearthed and were more successfully transplanted.

But the discovering of ministers and consuls and the shipping of them to foreign parts was scarcely more than a diversion of your leisure moments, and so soon as a convenient opportunity offered you took up the serious business of instructing mankind in the science of statesmanship. The climate of Beverly, Mass., could not have agreed with the English diplomat who put his head through a noose last summer and has lately gone home with its impress. So long as he remained in Washington he was entirely equal, not only to his obligations, but also to his opportunities. Before you had been three months in office he had taken a more accurate measure of the Secretary of State than your countrymen had ever been able to obtain. In the game that you cheerfully sat down to play for the rights and dignities of American fisher-

men you held all the best cards; but the British Minister, greatly to his credit and in perfect accordance with what was expected of him by Her Majesty's government, played his hand "to the queen's taste," and before you knew it, you had become disastrously involved. Let me do myself the pleasure and you the justice to say that you afterwards seemed to realize for a brief period the magnitude of the stakes, and made what appeared to be a manly and vigorous effort to extricate yourself. In the spring and summer of 1886 you used such expressions as these in referring to the wanton insolence of Canada: "Such proceedings I conceive to be flagrantly violative of the reciprocal commercial privileges to which citizens of the United States are lawfully entitled." "I earnestly protest against this unwarranted withholding of lawful commercial privileges from an American vessel and her owners, and for the loss and damage consequent thereon the government of Great Britain will be held liable." "Against this treatment I make instant and formal protest." "These are flagrant violations of treaty rights of their citizens, for which the United States expect prompt remedial action by Her Majesty's government." But these spasmodic throes were soon over, and you relapsed into that placid indulgence of the British Minister's propensities with which you had begun a year before the still unfinished game for the fisheries.

The chief trouble with you, my dear secretary, has been, from first to last—excepting only the short lucid interval to which allusion has been made—that you have conceived the whole dispute in the wrong light, and persisted in regarding it from the wrong point of view. You have persevered in the conviction that the American people would make room for one more laurel on your crowded brow, if only you succeeded in coaxing Canada into the gratuitous concession of a few trifling privileges; whereas, what the American people have been demanding all along was the resumption of ancient rights. You have constantly adhered to the position, if not to the belief, that our original title was to nothing at all, and that anything beyond this was an acquisition. It is immaterial to the country, though not to yourself, whether your fault has been perversity of purpose or obliquity of vision, but I for one shall be willing to let you plead guilty to a defect instead of a crime, if you ever betray a disposition to apply for that spiritual solace which is said to go hand in hand with confes-

sion. Let us then suppose that you were unable to see straight when the British Minister came to you in the early summer of 1885, with his bland assurance of a tender solicitude for the poor American fisherman, taken unawares at the opening of the season, and remitted to the untender mercies of the Treaty of 1818 by the cruel abrogation of the Treaty of Washington. This disinterested act of friendship produced such a profound impression upon your mind and made itself so entirely at home among the fibres of your heart that you forthwith shook off the trammels of a bigoted American Congress, kept the fishery clauses in operation during the summer, pledged yourself to an arbitration, declared yourself unfettered by the law of the land, advised the President against employing the retaliatory powers bestowed upon him, retained your serenity while more than four hundred American vessels were outraged and plundered, appointed yourself a plenipotentiary to negotiate a new treaty, placed yourself at the disposal of the astute and obliging Mr. Chamberlain, put your hand and seal to a document which surrendered a whole loaf in exchange for a few crumbs, applauded the President's phenomenal somersault after your work had been rejected, and expressed regret that you had not furnished him with a longer spring-board. The fact that you were never able to grasp the underlying principle of the American contention, namely, that of a tenancy in common, is the more remarkable since you had for so many years stood with Senator Saulsbury in precisely that relation to the State of Delaware. It is strange that the analogy never occurred to you. A few of the molecules whom you have not been in the habit of taking into account except in connection with the census have ranged themselves on your side, but you are almost the only great man who has failed to see the point.

As a rule, treaties of peace are valuable chiefly because the timely violation of them furnishes a convenient pretext for going to war. But we may be allowed to hope that the rule does not hold good as regards England and the United States, and it is an infinite pity that you chose to embark your fame in a fiasco when a becoming manifestation of firmness and sagacity might have been followed by a perpetual treaty of commerce and transportation, which would have made your record even more illustrious than your descent. Would it not have been worth an effort of the

understanding and the will to have succeeded in hastening the day when a vast alliance of English-speaking peoples, standing side by side and watching the insolent aggressions of dynastic pride, calmly and peacefully, but in tones that weigh a thousand million tons, shall say, Hands off ! You might so easily have perpetuated the control of your party, and it is not absurd even to imagine that in some happy summer that we now shall never see a Democratic convention might have assured you of its most distinguished consideration and invited you to go up higher. As things have turned out, you and other confiding creatures stood up together before the people only a few weeks ago and asked in unison, like the intruder in the play, "Is our presence agreeable to you?" Whereat, the people shouted : "No ! Your absence is very precious to us."

The accidental employment of the term "insolent aggressions," a moment ago, suggests that this is as good a place as any for an allusion to the most affecting melodrama which an American diplomat has ever put upon the stage. The scene was laid in Samoa, and you cast yourself for the part of first walking gentleman. There has been considerable doubt from the rise of the curtain, whether you ever learned your lines. May I venture to act as prompter and give you the cue?

The Samoan Islands are a lovely oasis in the lonely waste of the South Pacific. Picturesque, fertile, resourceful, they have for a decade allured the eyes of three great nations, and of these the United States was the first to embody in a formal treaty a reciprocal interest and attachment. It was in 1878 that the Administration of President Hayes made a treaty with King Malietoa, which guaranteed to us the privileges which we desired, and to him the recognition which he was sanguine enough to regard as the pledge of his stability. At the beginning of the following year he entered into a commercial convention with Germany, and six months later bound himself by a similar instrument to England. The new zeal for colonizing with which Prince Bismarck had inspired the German people, found one of its earliest outlets in Samoa, and subsequent events lead inevitably to the conclusion that he designed his compact with Malietoa to bear such fruitage as that blameless king had never dreamed of. A German trading-house had already acquired such a foothold in the islands as to serve the purposes of diplomacy when-

ever the time seemed ripe, through the secret channels of intrigue and the public pretence of vested rights. In 1884 Prince Bismarck conceived that the moment had arrived for the application of a firm, but gentle pressure, and the Samoan King put his name to a treaty which he almost immediately repudiated as having been signed under duress, and which England and the United States refused to consider binding. Two years later the South Pacific delimitation treaty between England and Germany declared Samoa neutral territory, but in the interval Prince Bismarck had prompted his consular and mercantile agents to a line of conduct which aroused the fears and the susceptibilities of the Samoans, and grossly outraged the dignity of their king; so that when in the spring of 1886 a German squadron steamed into the harbor of Apia, no one, except perhaps yourself, was surprised, and least of all the creature Tamasese, who had been incited to rebellion by Dr. Stuebel, the German consul, and Mr. Weber, the German tradesman. This parade of power was not the first overt act, but it was the most imposing demonstration in the long series of wanton outrages which have resulted in the capture and deportation of King Malietoa by Germany, in a devastating civil war, and in an exhibition of exasperating and perfidious imbecility on the part of the United States to which I am proud to say there are few parallels in our history. In abandoning King Malietoa to the vengeance of the German Government, and American interests in Samoa to the well-defended cupidity of German tradesmen, you have laid yourself open to the charge of every weakness save only that of vacillation. Your worst enemy cannot pretend that your descent to Avernus has not been swift, easy and uninterrupted. You have now and then exercised your powers of fluent composition by dictating dispatches to the American minister at Berlin, and further cultivated the amenities of diplomatic intercourse by suave and dulcet deprecations and assurances addressed to a conference of the three powers assembled in Washington at your instance. But so far from tying the hands of Prince Bismarck you did not even perplex him, nor succeed in delaying for an hour the accomplishment of his designs. The country may never know just how far he permitted you to understand the situation, and it is certainly impossible at this moment to say whether he was relying upon your ignorance or



your good nature. He had much to say about the "status quo," but the status quo to which he referred existed in his own mind, and not in Samoa. Nor is it now material to him or to us whether or not he showed you his own hand after a careful inspection of yours. The world is aware that he won the game without losing a single trick.

Samoa is far away, and it is even remoter in the mind than on the map, but the story of Malietoa's martyrdom is pathetic enough to find its way into every uncorrupted heart the world over. The melancholy record of monarchs sold and snared into captivity during all the ages presents no more affecting picture. We have no need to rely upon second-hand descriptions, nor even upon the vivid narrative of Mr. W. L. Rees, the legal adviser of the Samoan government, in a recent number of *The Nineteenth Century*, for the king has told the tale himself. On the day before he went aboard the German man-of-war he addressed one proclamation "To all Samoa" and another to the American consul. In the first he bade his kindred and his people farewell. "On account of my great love to my country and my great affection to all Samoa," he said, "this is the reason that I deliver up my body to the German Government," and "because I do not desire that again the blood of Samoa shall be spilt for me," though he knew not what his offence was. To Mr. Sewall, the consul who executed your wishes in Samoa, the king repeated, in language so simple that not even an American diplomatist could misunderstand it, some very bitter truths. He told how, when it would have been easy to crush the rebels, he refrained because the English and American consuls so advised him. He reminded him of promises solemnly made and lightly broken; nor in his extremity did he forget to pray that they might yet be kept for the sake of his people. A brave man surrendering to force to save others from a death which would have been welcome to himself, is a spectacle which is not often seen in these degenerate days. Malietoa was a heroic figure, and possibly it is not too late for a Christian gentleman to learn a lesson of fortitude and devotion from a savage monarch.

Thus far I have presumed to remind you of the guise in which you have appeared upon the stage of action when the rest of the *dramatis personæ* were the representatives of one or both of two great powers, and I believe that I have already completed the cate-

gory of your performances under those conditions. It is scarcely worth while to allude to the extradition treaty which Mr. Phelps skillfully negotiated with Her Majesty's Government in London, for the American Minister was considerate enough to close that transaction without making an inconvenient draft upon your resources. Moreover, the country has lately been in considerable doubt as to the precise attitude of the Administration towards that instrument, and it might perhaps annoy you needlessly if I were to assume that you had ever staked your reputation upon it. Nor would it be important to do more than allude, in passing, to several minor examples of the way in which it is possible for an American Secretary of State to discharge the functions of his office, were it not for the fact that they help to verify an interesting theory to which I may presently invite your attention.

Somewhat to the surprise of your countrymen, you took a lively interest in the fortunes of Mr. Cutting, of Mexico and the United States, and in your attempts to befriend that contumacious journalist you suffered numerous mishaps, which if they had befallen any one who was employed in some department of human activity less venerable and majestic than that of statecraft would certainly have produced Homeric laughter. As it was certain lewd fellows of the baser sort found it hard to confine themselves within the limits of decorum, and would have found it still harder had not the extraordinary rapidity with which your representatives succumbed to the climate of Mexico suggested the possibility that in the swift process of rotation your choice might at any moment fall upon them. Your singular passion for Mr. Cutting seems to have been inflamed by the ingenuity with which he manipulated the border. To print a libel on our side of the line and peddle it on their's appeared to you nothing less than genius. You have always pinned your faith to the doctrine of heredity, but in this case you magnanimously acknowledged that those unfortunates who have nothing more than intellect to fall back on are entitled to the benefits of diplomatic intervention.

Under somewhat similar circumstances you embraced the slender chance of delivering a couple of gallant Mohammedans of ancient lineage from the clutches of that misguided potentate, the Sultan of Morocco, by sending a couple of slow but ambitious cruisers—one apiece for the Mohammedans—to the coast of

Africa. A cold and calculating world has forgotten what became of this enterprise, but I entertain such a cheering hope that it may not have faded from your own recollection that I cannot prevail upon myself to refrain from alluding to the chivalrous spirit in which you conceived your duty on that occasion. Earthly distinction is a poor thing, but when, once perhaps in a lifetime, "that happy day on which the gods have smiled" has fairly dawned, it must be glorious to feel that a beautiful emotion need not expend itself in heart-beats, but may instantly enjoy the blessed privilege of wreaking itself in immortal deeds.

And now we come to Hayti, whither a large part of our navy has preceded us. Perchance your anxiety for the Black Republic was warmed into a glow by the presence of its aged ruler, the incomparable Salomon, within our borders en route for Paris, with the traces of long care upon his visage, and the rewards of toil about his person. It was a sight well fitted to arouse your benignant sympathy with the unhappy people whom his departure had bereft, and when in due course a pair of Haytian patriots began their disinterested struggle for the archives and whatsoever else remained in sight, you prepared to concentrate upon their varying fortunes that restless gaze which you had hitherto suffered to wander up and down the earth. It so happened that at this very moment a campaign which was to set the seal of immortality upon your achievements was in progress here at home. An unbridled and ungodly press had stooped to insinuate that there was a subtle relation between the course of events in the Island of Hayti and the hum of activity which pervaded the navy yards of the United States during the weeks which immediately preceded the election. The visible relation was merely such as might be expected to exist between a great, strong, enlightened and prosperous nation, whose honor and dignity had been committed to your care and keeping, and a small, weak, ignorant and bankrupt spot of earth, for whose assets two rabbles were conducting one of their periodical contentions. A Secretary of State, who was capable of construing his duty less rigidly than yourself, might have been satisfied to exalt his office and his country by a display of that "proud repose which is the well-knit vestment of authority," and so indeed might you, is the asseveration of your enemies, had it not been for the kind coincidence that the election was close at hand, and that thousands of

your fellow-citizens were out of a job. Experience had taught you that, however the case may be with a Scotchman and his joke, it does not require a surgical operation to get a political revelation into the head of an impartial American citizen, nor the right sort of a ballot into his hand. A dollar and a half a day will accomplish the desired result every time, if only good judgment be shown in the selection of the beneficiaries. The necessity was pressing, and you could not wait for that reasonable solution of the difficulties involved in the seizure of an American steamer, which was freely offered when the aggressors submitted to the arbitration of the aggrieved. With a rare and beautiful enthusiasm which will long embellish the records of his office the Secretary of the Navy responded to your imperial aspiration, and it was neither your fault nor his that the country was not saved in the way you had appointed.

And this, my dear secretary, comes sufficiently near to exhausting the list of your diplomatic masterpieces. If, as I dare to hope, you should confer upon me the distinction of beguiling a fragment of the prolonged leisure which is about to overtake you, by a casual glance at these pages, the thought may possibly occur to your mind which has occurred to others, and to which I have already made allusion. When you have laid off the cares of state and retired to the commonwealth which is soon to make the rash experiment of attempting to exist without your assistance, I cannot doubt that you will gradually come to survey the events of the last four years with the clear and impartial vision of posterity. You will then discover, perhaps to your amazement, I trust to your mortification, that your thunderbolts have been hurled against only weak and helpless members of the family of nations, and that your comity has been reserved exclusively for the great and powerful. This reflection, whether it disturb your tranquillity or not, will humiliate your countrymen. They will remember with shame that you helped England to all she wanted in the North Atlantic, and Germany to more than she had asked for in the South Pacific; and that these acts of pure benevolence were diversified by ignoble demonstrations of national pride and prowess so often as your contemplation turned upon the the struggling sovereignties of Mexico and Samoa, of Hayti and Morocco.

The country beheld your rise to greatness with approbation,

but not with sympathy, and it will follow your retreat into oblivion with glad but not vindictive eyes. You were never blessed with friendships, and you are doomed to make the rest of your pilgrimage without admirers. You have been tried by many public reverses, and, as I seek for some expression fitly to discriminate the emotion with which you are remembered, my thoughts recur to one of the final touches which the great painter of men and manners put upon the most pathetic picture in modern literature. Comparing George the Third to King Lear, Thackeray borrowed these lines from Shakespeare :

“ Vex not his ghost, oh let him pass, he hates him  
That would upon the rack of this tough world  
Stretch him out longer.”

ARTHUR RICHMOND.